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Reply to: **Tampa**

December 5, 2001

MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO INTERFERENCE WITH FLIGHT CREW

Tampa . . . An individual entered a guilty plea today in the United States District Court to one count of interference of a flight crew and attendants. MANUEL SOTO, age 41 of New York City, New York, appeared before the Honorable Thomas G. Wilson and plead guilty to interference with a flight crew and attendants on September 7, 2001.

The facts as alleged are that on September 7, 2001 the defendant was aboard US Airways MetroJet flight 2663 en route from La Guardia International Airport, New York, New York to Tampa International Airport, Tampa, Florida. While on that flight, the defendant did intimidate the flight crew and attendants by verbally assaulting them, putting them in fear of their safety, and by being disruptive, tempestuous and intimidating. Additionally, while the defendant was on the plane and after being subdued by off-duty law enforcement officers, he made the statement that the "plane was going to crash" and "he was going to heaven because God loved him." This statement, along with the defendant's behavior, caused chaos among the passengers, interfering with the flight crew and the attendants' normal in-flight jobs.

A sentencing date will be scheduled shortly. The defendant faces a maximum term of imprisonment of 20 years, a fine of \$250,000, or both. The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney John F. Rudy, III.